

Bronchoscopy

Your doctor would like you to have a bronchoscopy to find the cause of your chest problems. Bronchoscopy is an examination of the air passages of your lungs. A narrow, flexible tube (bronchoscope) is passed through your nose or mouth and into the air passages. This lets us look directly at the airways and take samples of tissue or sputum (spit). This is usually **not** an uncomfortable exam.

Before the Test

- Do not eat or drink anything after midnight the night before the test. You may take important medicines like your heart or blood pressure, and pain pills with a small amount of water. Do not take any medicine that will upset an empty stomach (like aspirin). Do not take your insulin or diabetes pills. Bring your insulin and medicines with you. You can take them after the test. If you have any questions about taking your medicines please call the phone number given below. If you are an inpatient, your ward doctors will answer your questions.
- You must not drive the day of your bronchoscopy. If you are leaving the hospital after the test, you must arrange for a responsible adult to drive you home and stay with you the day of the test. If this is impossible, we may be able to arrange overnight lodging at the hospital. Ask about this when your test is scheduled.
- Do not smoke the morning of your test. Brush your teeth and rinse your mouth well.
- The bronchoscopy doctors and nurses will tell you about the test in detail and answer any questions you have.

Risks of Bronchoscopy

The risks are small. They will be explained in greater detail when you come for your test. They can include:

- Over-sedation or receiving too much sedating medicine. To help avoid this, we give the medicine in small amounts until you are comfortable.
- Bleeding, you will have blood tests that tell us how your blood clots.
- Pneumothorax, a leak in the lining of the lung caused when the sample is taken. This is a risk when samples are taken using x-rays (fluoroscopy).

The Test

- Outpatients should report to the Ambulatory Evaluation Unit (4E), on the fourth floor at the scheduled time.

- A small needle will be placed in a vein in your arm. This is used to give you medicine before and during the exam to make you feel relaxed and sleepy.

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- You will be asked to breathe in a novocaine-like mist. This numbs your nose and throat. The doctor will also put some numbing jelly into your nose and ask you to sniff it in. The medications have an unpleasant taste but they will make the test more comfortable.
- Oxygen is used during the exam to make sure you feel comfortable breathing. The oxygen is given through nasal prongs (two short plastic tubes that rest by your nose). Two machines called monitors, are used to closely watch the oxygen level in your blood and your heart rate. One monitor uses a small clip on your finger or ear lobe to give us an oxygen reading. The other uses small patches on your chest and is like having an EKG (electrocardiogram). Neither machine will cause you any discomfort. We will also check your blood pressure.
- During the exam the doctor uses more of the novocaine-like medicine through the bronchoscope to help stop coughing. Suction attached to the bronchoscope removes extra medicine and sputum. Sometimes a tiny brush is passed through the bronchoscope to pick up tissue cells. A wire with a pincher on the end can be used to remove a tiny piece of tissue. Since the lungs have no pain fibers, you will feel no pain when this is done. You might cough up some blood in your sputum if samples are taken. This is normal. An x-ray machine can be used during the test to check the location of brushes or pinchers.
- The examination with the bronchoscope usually takes from 5 to 20 minutes. The whole test takes about one hour. Most people tell us that this is ***not*** an uncomfortable test.

After the Test

The doctor will give you the results. If you wish, the doctor will also talk to anyone who came with you.

If samples are taken, the results will not be available the day of the test.

You will stay at the hospital for about two hours after the exam. You will be asked not to eat or drink anything until the numbing medicine wears off. This takes about one hour. A nurse will check on you to make sure you are comfortable. You will be given a small meal when it is safe for you to eat.

You will be given instructions to follow before you go home or back to your ward.

More Information

Information about lung problems, medical tests, and smoking is available in the Patient Education Center on the 1st floor.

If you have questions that need to be answered before the test, call the Ambulatory Evaluation Unit at (612) 725-2289.

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